



SBOE Takes Public Comment, Addresses ISTEP Testing Issues at Monthly Meeting

The Indiana State Board of Education (SBOE) discussed changes to ISTEP+ assessment, teacher evaluations and turnaround academies, among several topics, at its monthly regular business meeting in Indianapolis on February 4, 2015. Nearly 50 public comments, predominately concerning extended testing hours and windows for ISTEP+, were heard at the marathon board meeting.

SBOE approved improvements to the A-F school performance appeals process, cut scores for teacher licensure exams and recommendations to update SBOE's Strategic Plan. Also, as part of the Strategic Planning process, The New Teacher Project (TNTP), a national nonprofit organization, made recommendations to improve the teacher evaluation process. Indiana law, and the ESEA Waiver, requires teacher evaluation plans to include multiple measures to assess teacher performance, including teacher observation and multiple objective measures. Local school corporations determine those measures and percentage of inclusion in the overall teacher evaluation.

"I think it's important when we talk about objective measures that we make it clear it is more than just ISTEP," said Jessica Conlon, TNTP Representative. "Using multiple measures ensures that evaluations aren't over-reliant on any one factor and don't undermine the complexity of a teacher's job by looking at one measure."

Ultimately, Mr. Hendry, Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, offered a resolution encouraging the legislature to enable SBOE to define a range for "significantly inform" in the future. SBOE delayed a vote on specific weights and ranges on multiple objective measures for teacher evaluation in order to further examine the topic. SBOE passed the resolution by a 7-4 vote.

In a memo provided by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) to SBOE, but not provided publicly, IDOE cited federal No Child Left Behind waiver requirements as the reason ISTEP+ test time is more than doubling in length this year. IDOE also explained that it, and not SBOE, determines the length of the ISTEP+ test.

Fourth District SBOE Representative Sarah O'Brien questioned why the testing times recently communicated by IDOE were more than double the requested time they brought before SBOE last September, and more than tripled the time recommended as necessary to execute the practice test. Several school administrators testified they did not feel schools had been given adequate time by IDOE to prepare and plan for the extended testing period. Both practice tests and regular ISTEP+ testing will be conducted at IDOE's discretion this spring, rather than the originally planned fall pilot testing.

"We have received a large level of public input on this topic, which is incredibly useful to the Board," said Hendry. "However, through these communications I have noticed that there is a misunderstanding that the Board set the hours. There was never a vote last year when the Board said we need 20 hours of testing."

After considerable testimony and discussion, SBOE voted 7-2 to extend this year's ISTEP+ testing window for multiple choice, applied skills, practice tests and IREAD-3, providing a longer period to accomplish IDOE's testing requirements, meaning less time per day for student testing.

SBOE ended the meeting discussing issues regarding Gary Community Schools Corporation (GCSC) and IDOE's proposed implementation plan regarding its High Risk Designation for the district. Gary Community

Schools Superintendent, Dr. Cheryl Pruitt, sent a letter to SBOE with concerns and questions regarding IDOE's plan, noting that GCSC "cannot support any recommended plan by the IDOE." ([see letter](#)) IDOE has shared its plan with the Gary Community School Board, however IDOE has not yet shared information with SBOE, which is significant because SBOE maintains legal authority over Dunbar-Pulaski Middle school and Roosevelt as Turnaround Academies. SBOE expressed significant concern about the very different statements being made by IDOE and Gary Community Schools, and requested additional information. First District SBOE Representative Tony Walker urged both caution and attention to the district in meeting its student needs

"There is a serious divide between Gary Schools and the Department of Education," said Second District SBOE Representative Dr. David Freitas. "I feel we have a responsibility to the children of Gary, but I feel totally in the dark concerning the IDOE's plan for the district."

SBOE also heard from Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) Superintendent Louis Ferebee in regards to intervention efforts at George Washington, John Marshall, and Broad Ripple, all of which are currently under SBOE intervention. Dr. Ferebee reported the district is currently performing a needs assessment of these schools to implement a three phase plan for the creation of a Transformation Zone. Phase 1 of the Transformation Zone is scheduled to begin next month. The Board unanimously approved Phase 1 of the Transformation Zone plan.

Dr. Ferebee next spoke in regards to transition efforts at Arlington High School from its existing turnaround operator to IPS leadership. He informed SBOE members that IPS has begun the process of conducting stakeholder surveys, developing staff and facilitating transition activities as they relate to collaborations with feeder schools and a potential partnership with Cathedral High School. Arlington remains a turnaround academy under SBOE jurisdiction, and SBOE postponed action on the Arlington High School transition plan until its March meeting.

"If we can stay down that path of using data, expertise and best practices, then I like the way this is going," said Seventh District SBOE Representative Dan Elsner. "Timeliness, clarity, focus on children is where we need to go with the process. There are some things we have learned along this journey that we can put toward this effort."

Dr. Ferebee closed his presentation by commenting on Thomas Carr Howe, Emmerich Manual and Emma Donnan turnaround academies. Currently, Charter Schools USA (CSUSA) acts as the turnaround school operator for the schools and is working with IPS on a partnership model that would expand Emma Donnan from a middle school to a K-8 community school. However, since a partnership contract nor IPS Board approval have been finalized, SBOE opted to delay approval of the plan. SBOE ultimately made a motion for the development of two separate contracts with IPS and CSUSA for approval at the March meeting detailing the partnership to support Emma Donnan.

"The contracts will need to provide incentives for all parties to work together, be successful and ultimately do what's best for children," said At-large SBOE member Gordon Hendry. "Next month hopefully we'll see a contract that reflects these priorities and we can move on from there."

Most materials presented at the February 4, 2015 SBOE Regular Business Meeting can be found at <http://in.gov/sboe/2607.htm>. The next SBOE meeting will be held on March 12, 2015 in Indianapolis.

Media Contact:

Marc Lotter

O: (317) 232-9080 C: (317) 726-6589

E-mail: mlotter@sboe.in.gov